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ABSTRACT

This report, part of a research series on roles of participants in high school change, focuses on activities of school district office personnel. Interview and observational data were gathered in nine states. Following a discussion of relevant literature, study findings are presented in five categories: description of regular jobs and roles of district office personnel, role of personnel in the change process, description of strategies used by personnel in charge, and perceptions of office personnel by others. A subsequent section reports on life in the district office. Findings are consistent with previous studies. Office personnel are involved in a wide range of activities, and there is little clarity on the part of teachers and others about the scope and purposes of these roles while district personnel themselves are often not able to clearly conceptualize their roles or even differentiate between line and staff positions. Further study is needed to derive trends about how such personnel are involved in change. The report concludes with two case study vignettes of district offices in action. Because of a lack of research information, ethnographic studies and development of standard role definitions are needed to define office personnel roles. Stereotypes of these roles that are held by the public and by teachers are not congruent with actual activities; differences in formal authority appear to be a critical factor in popular misconceptions. (CJH)

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DISTRICT OFFICE PERSONNEL:

THEIR ROLES AND INFLUENCE ON SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM CHANGE:

WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

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District Office Personnel:

Their Roles and Influence on School and Classroom Change:[1,2]

What We Don't Know

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Much has been made in recent years of the importance of school improvement at the "grass roots" level and of the significance of the local school as the unit of adoption and focus of change efforts. At the same time there has been increasing initiation of change from the district level and from agencies beyond the district. As a part of recent research on the change process the Research on the Improvement Process Program staff included some exploratory data collection and analysis activities that focused on the roles and interactions between district office personnel and participants in the change process in local schools.

The decision to add the district office focus resulted from the staff's earlier research in elementary and secondary schools in which district office personnel were noted as a source of influence on the change process. It was not always clear what they did nor how extensive their change facilitator roles were. Interestingly a subsequent survey of the literature did not turn up many studies, theories, or extensive descriptions of what district office personnel

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[2] The research described herein was conducted under contract with the National Institute of Education. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education, and no endorsement by the National Institute of Education should be inferred.

do in general. Consequently, this new emphasis was added to the data collection and analysis activities.

The limited amount of work to date has focused on describing the activities and functions of district office persons and on examining their change facilitator role in schools and classrooms. At this point in the study we are only able to identify and describe a series of impressions and hypotheses; specific conclusive answers require more systematic study. In this paper a summary of the published literature about district office personnel and tentative findings from our exploratory field work are presented.

What the Literature Offers About the Roles of District Office Personnel

There is a surprisingly limited amount of literature about the roles and activities of school district office personnel. Much that is available targets the generic role of supervisor and the activities of supervision. These tend to be theoretical and context-free descriptions of the role rather than pieces that directly scrutinize real positions and people who work in particular district offices. As a result, it appears that much of the limited supply of published literature deals not with the particular real life jobs of education professionals, but instead addresses an abstract set of functions that district personnel are assumed to use. This lack of concrete connection does not appear to be the authors' intents; rather, there appears to be a contradiction between the stereotypic assumptions that are widely held about the work of district office personnel and what district office people actually do.

A review of the existing literature yielded very little concrete information about the roles of district office personnel, and nearly all of the

few studies that are available contain a lament over the lack of data. Fullan (1982) attributes the paucity of research on second level administrators and district support staff to the great diversity of roles and organization and to the preoccupation of researchers with studying superintendents. A similar conclusion was reached by a recent task force. In October 1982 the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Executive Council appointed a task force to study the roles, functions, and impact of districtwide supervisory personnel. An attempt by the task force at reviewing data already available revealed that there were few objective data about the role and importance of district wide supervisors (Costa and Guditus, 1984). Harris (1985) who agrees with this summary suggests that existing information may be difficult to find because central office personnel are generally assigned multiple roles and the literature often masquerades under several different titles, such as supervision, supervisory practice, or clinical supervision. He further suggests that one might need to come about descriptions of the role of district office people "through the back door," which means one may need to take an indirect approach to the literature search. Still, the basic impression is that the available literature is centered around the generic role of supervisor and supervisory practice. The many other roles and activities of district office personnel seem generally to have been neglected as topics for study; although the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory's synthesis of the school effectiveness research indicated that there are several actions that the district can take, such as the establishment of clear and stable policies, expectations for improvement, and strong systems of support to help schools become more effective (Goal-Based Education Program, 1984).

Types of Studies Available

Of studies that have been done, most have utilized questionnaire/survey methodology. Smith (1983) examined 21 studies on supervisors and found that eighteen of the 21 studies employed questionnaires, one used an interview, one combined a questionnaire and an interview for data collection, and one was based on observation. Sullivan (1982), whose study also used observation, documented 14,753 minutes of supervisory behavior.

In 1984, the 1982 task force appointed by ASCD called for research studies to be done on district office personnel, and offered mini-grants to encourage and stimulate research in this area. The results of those studies are just now becoming available. The task force in the mean time did a study of its own by surveying the population that responded to the Costa and Guditus (1984) article announcing the ASCD project and available fundings (Blumberg, 1984). The survey, they are quick to point out, yielded more questions than answers.

Classic Role Descriptions and Training

The classic description of the role and activities of district office personnel is well represented in the earlier work of Harris (1963). According to Harris there are four types of positions suggested under the general heading, "supervisor": general, all-level supervisors; general, specific-level supervisors; special, all-level supervisors; and special, specific-level supervisors. He lists the tasks of supervision as developing curriculum, organizing for instruction, staffing, providing facilities, providing materials, arranging for inservice education, orienting new staff members, relating special services, developing public relations, and evaluating. These

tasks are implemented by supervisors through planning, organizing, leading, controlling, and assessing (Harris, 1963).

Glickman (1981), however, prefers to view supervisory behavior on a continuum ranging from listening to reinforcing behaviors, with three viable orientations: directive, non-directive, or collaborative. Sullivan's (1982) observation of supervisors suggests however that the actual day-to-day activities of supervisors are incongruent with the classical description of the role. A functional analysis of her data using Mintzberg's categories showed that supervisors primarily maintain the day-to-day operations of the school system, and essentially function as do managers in industry. Ninety-eight percent of their activities fell into the managerial categories defined by Mintzberg (1973) with especially high activity in three categories: resource allocator, monitor, and disseminator, which indicates that the supervisor acts as an insider, one who is primarily concerned with internal operations. There was little activity in areas requiring external contact as an official representative of the school system. According to Sullivan the supervisor acts as an information broker and is literally a hub of communication. Sixty-one percent of the supervisor's time was spent in communications; two-thirds of the communications were informal, brief contacts with one or two individuals that lasted usually five minutes or less. The bulk of the communication was lateral, a small amount (9%) was with superordinants, and only 14% was with teachers. Supervisors initiated 62% of all contacts.

According to the report of the ASCD study (Blumberg, 1984), when supervisors were asked what three functions seem to consume the majority of their time during a typical work week, there was a variety of answers. However, several categories predominated: 1) meetings, 2) paperwork, 3) planning, 4) curriculum study, 5) staff development, 6) public relations, 7)

trouble shooting and reporting to the superintendent, and 8) visitations to schools and observations. Other categories in the list included budget, personnel, dealing with parents, teaching, district wide activities, research, scoring tests, etc. District office supervisors were frustrated by not having enough time to do what was needed to be done, and by having to wear too many hats. The report concluded "central office supervisors seem to be very busy people, involved in doing many things, some of which appear to be more symbolic than concrete" (Blumberg, 1984, p. 15).

Smith (1983) reports that there is an increased emphasis on administrative and personnel functions for supervisors and that after having reviewed 21 research studies on supervisors, she still was not able to find a standard description of the supervisor position. Blumberg (1984) reports that there is a probability that much of the supervisor's time is taken by activities not directly related to the exercise of their expertise. Costa and Guditus (1984) noted that supervisor's roles, expectations and job descriptions are often vague. According to Sullivan (1982) job descriptions for supervisors have traditionally echoed the supervision literature and there is an inconsistency between the job descriptions and the work that is done. Training also has been traditionally based on the literature. One general implication out of the literature is that supervisors are doing jobs for which they were not trained, or if they were, the training was based on ungrounded theoretical models, rather than analyses of what they actually do.

Elimination of Positions

Another pattern in the findings is the indication that the number of district wide instructional supervisors has been slowly but steadily declining during the last decade (Costa and Guditus, 1984). Approximately one half of

the respondents to the ASCD study indicated that district office supervisory positions in their districts had been reduced and the result was that they had to assume additional responsibilities, which reduced school visits and increased the number of teachers they had to supervise (Blumberg, 1984). About one third of the sample thought that if their jobs were eliminated the services they performed would no longer be available to the district, especially if their jobs were very specific, such as subject matter specialists, as opposed to general curriculum people. Blumberg (1984) reports that "these people, for the most part, seem convinced of their worth to the school district" (p. 16). As convinced as they are of their worth to the school district, they receive little formal credit or feedback about their accomplishments (Costa and Guditus, 1984). They seem to get a sense of their effectiveness or lack of it through informal means, such as casual comments and reactions from administrators and teachers, rather than from any systematic procedures (Blumberg, 1984).

Result: Confusion

Given the general lack of information about district office personnel, the inconsistencies between the standard descriptions of their roles and the reality of the work they are actually doing, and their tendency to be assigned multiple roles, it is not surprising that there is confusion surrounding the role (Blumberg, 1984; Harris, 1963). The variety of job titles of the people who work in the district office also adds to the confusion. The job titles of the people who responded to the Costa/Guditus article "covered the waterfront" (Blumberg, 1984, p. 2). Some of the terms or labels given to people who work in the district office include consultant; coordinator; specialist; instructional leader; advisor; resource teacher; staff developer; subject

matter specialist; director of curriculum and instructional services, media, materials, and/or elementary and secondary programs (Costa and Guditus, 1984; Harris, 1963). To add to the confusion, the term supervisory personnel includes the superintendent, supervisors, principals and other administrative and special service personnel giving leadership to supervisory activities regardless of their position, title, status, amount of responsibility or formal authority (Glickman, 1981; Harris, 1963). In theory, the term supervisor is reserved for those whose primary responsibility is supervisory activity (Harris, 1963). Yet the wide variety of titles and labels seems to suggest a lack of underlying agreement. However, most seem to cluster into two broad categories or levels--line and staff (Costa and Guditus, 1984; Fullan, 1982). Unfortunately, little is said in the literature about the differences and/or similarities between line personnel and staff personnel.

Interviews conducted by the ASCD task force members suggested that "the role expectations of the positions with which we are concerned were simply idiosyncratic to each situation" (Blumberg 1984, p. 2). And "it seems to be the case that even with specific job descriptions the role of the central office supervisor tends more toward vagueness and ambiguity than toward concreteness" (Blumberg, 1984, p. 15). Harris (1963, p. 103) suggests that this confusion over titles of supervisors is indicative of the generally confused thinking about central staff organization.

District Office Role in Change

As scarce as the district office literature is, it does include references to district office responsibilities and involvement in change (Cox, 1983; Fullan, 1982; Harris, 1983). Huberman and Miles (1984) report that district office administrative commitment is important to the success of an innovation

and that pressure without district office support and commitment leads to teacher resistance and failure. They also report that district office people are most often the early advocates of an innovation. According to Harris (1963), one of the major responsibilities of school supervisors is to stimulate change and to develop acceptance of the idea that continued change is inevitable and can be highly desirable. Fullan (1982) reports that some school districts establish effective change processes while others follow a disastrous pattern, and that the district administrator is the single most important individual for setting the expectations and the tone of the pattern of change. He admits though that "although there is a fair amount of evidence about the role of the administrator in change..., there is little representative information on what administrators do and think in their total roles" (p. 160). In an article that describes how principals, external assistors, and central office staff each contributed to a change effort and the outcomes of their particular assistance, Cox (1983) reports that the help of the district office people in a school change effort contributed more than any other single group of assistors. They can perform critical functions that make school improvement really work. Cox suggests that district office personnel have emerged as significant actors in the process of change and that they may well be the "linch pins of school improvement efforts" (Cox, 1983, p. 10).

In summary, the literature base is surprisingly limited. There appears to be some inconsistencies between the realities of practice and the ideals reflected in the literature. More study is needed to understand clearly what district office personnel do, and what the real possibilities might be for their influence of the change process in schools and classrooms. This is another basis for our emerging focus on these individuals.

Plan of the Study

One objective of the Research on the Improvement Process (RIP) program is to develop an overall perspective on the change process as it occurs in elementary and secondary schools by integrating the results of our previous research in elementary schools with the findings from current research on change in high schools. Accomplishing this goal has required that at least minimal information be collected about the roles and functions of district office personnel.

More specifically, the study questions for this phase of the work are:

1) What kinds of changes are occurring in schools in the district and how have they been facilitated?
2) How has (school based) leadership affected the change process in schools?
3) What is the function and influence of the district office as it relates to school change?

The information and data that have been compiled to address the question about the district office have been derived from two sources. The first source is from analysis of the literature and previous studies which were briefly summarized above. The second source is from analysis of interview data. The interview data base includes tape recordings of interviews, collected in earlier RIP studies, that provide occasional references to the district office, and audio tapes of recent study interviews including specific questions about district office personnel. Appendix 1 is a summary of the data base.

Appendix 2 is a summary of the interview questions that were used with district office personnel during the 1984-85 current data collection period. Appendix 3 is a summary of the subset of questions that were asked of

school-based personnel (principals, teachers, department heads, etc.) regarding the role of the district office.

Analyses of the interview data and related documentation that was collected during the two- to four-day trips to each school district have included systematic, individual interviewer debriefings and self written debriefing protocols based upon answering structured questions. Additional reduction and analysis activities included pooled debriefing of the several interviewers from each site using a set of structured questions that were based on the study questions; re-listening to the taped interviews for the purposes of developing catalogs of types of practices, perceptions of practices, and descriptions of practices; and staff discussion and speculation among themselves and with research consultants and practitioners about the role and perceptions of district office personnel.

The remainder of this paper is a summary of the tentative descriptions, hypotheses and recommendations that have emerged out of these exploratory field work activities and data analyses.

Description of Findings of Initial Studies of the Role of District Office Personnel

The findings from the data analyses can be summarized in five categories: (1) description of the regular jobs and roles of district office personnel, (2) the role of district office personnel in relation to the change process, (3) description of particular strategies and tactics that are used by district office personnel in change, and (4) perceptions of the district office personnel by others. A subsequent section reports on life in the district office. The descriptions of findings, impressions and hypotheses that follow

are organized under these headings.

Description of the Regular Jobs and Roles of District Office Personnel

Our findings and descriptions of the roles and practices of district office personnel are quite consistent with the previous work of Blumberg, Glickman and others, as described in the literature review in this paper.

District office personnel are involved in a wide range of administrative, evaluative, and facilitating activities. One useful way to cluster activities is to distinguish between "line" and "staff" positions. Staff personnel are those who have no authority over persons for whom they provide consultation, advice and counsel (i.e. teachers). Line personnel on the other hand are those who have persons reporting directly to them (direct reports) and are placed on the organizational chart some where between the superintendent and teachers. Line personnel supervise and evaluate personnel under them in the organization. Staff personnel are responsible for programs or projects rather than "positions." Some examples of activities that staff personnel are engaged in are finding and providing materials and ideas, providing staff development training, visiting classrooms, meeting with department heads, meeting with other staff personnel, scoring tests, developing curriculum (adding courses, developing lesson plans), monitoring, evaluating curricula and programs, initiating, adopting textbooks, and planning. Activities that line personnel are involved in include attending a variety of meetings daily, establishing committees, evaluating programs and personnel, completing paperwork, "putting out fires," meeting with supervisors or consultants, making purchasing decisions, providing an ear to principals, and initiating ideas.

A wide range of titles is used for district office positions. The selection of titles that are used in district offices is not consistent across

districts with a "supervisor" in one district having the same role as someone called a "coordinator" or "consultant" in another district. Up to the level of the assistant superintendent there does not appear to be a consistent pattern to the roles and responsibilities that are associated with particular job titles. There is some consistency in the use of the director title, with these persons typically having other personnel report to them and they in turn reporting to assistant superintendents.

Personnel in the district office often seem to have relatively little clarity about the scope and primary purposes of their roles. Further, there is wide variation in their views about their role. When they do have clear understanding, it appears to be directly related to the superintendent's expression of clear expectations for them. If the superintendent does not articulate a sharp image or does not really provide attention to their role, then there seems to be a great deal of ambiguity in their definition. In general, district office personnel appear to have a clearer definition of the roles of others in the school district than they do of their own.

There is tremendous variation in how much time district office personnel spend in schools. Some roles appear to require little or no time in schools, such as the budget director or personnel officer. Others may require as much as 80% - 90% of their time in schools (e.g. special education teacher consultants). Interestingly, there is wide variation in time spent in schools among individuals filling the same role. For example, a person in the role of curriculum specialist could work directly with teachers to support their instructional practices and spend the majority of their time in schools and in classrooms. While in another district a person with the same responsibilities may spend little time in classrooms. There is inconsistency even within a district. For instance, in one high school, teachers reported never seeing the

language supervisor while the math supervisor was reported to be in the school frequently and regularly.

There are different central missions for district office personnel. One responsibility is to help the district in planning, and to fulfill the many district administration functions, including the basic bureaucratic operations of the district. These are the budget, personnel, buildings and grounds directors and other types who manage the supportive and organizational arrangements for the district's schools. All of these people and jobs tend to be clustered together within the same label of district office. Another mission is providing direct support of instruction and school based activities. Teacher support may be supplied by generalists whose work is generic in nature with a focus on the processes of instruction. Other teacher support comes from subject area specialists who supply help within the context of particular curricula. Yet another mission has to do with control and monitoring of school personnel. Some curriculum specialists may assume this function; however, monitoring of school administrators is more typically done by higher level district office staff.

There is a dramatic difference in the amount of real authority and power individual district office personnel have that is related to whether they are in line or staff positions. We define line to mean those directly in a chain of command from the superintendent on down to staff in schools. Persons in line positions are directly accountable for personnel "below" them, and persons below line personnel are accountable "to" them. Staff positions are those for which the job responsibilities do not carry with them formal authority over the people who must follow through with their suggestions. The power and influence relationships can become complex, especially given the overlapping array of organizational and instructional missions.

Many personnel in the district office do not understand the distinction between line and staff positions in an organizational structure. There seems not only to be a lack of conceptual understanding, but also a lack of recognizing the operational differences and what they can mean for responsibility and potential for influence. Comments such as, "I don't know, I guess I'm neither fish nor foul," or, "I'm both," were frequently heard answers to questions about placement on the organizational chart.

The number of district office staff that are available to work in schools seems to be directly related to the amount of support from outside the district. Outside support comes from state, federal or other such external sources. Those areas of schooling that have special interest support, such as special education, gifted and talented, compensatory education, bilingual education, etc., have relatively larger district office staffs and they are more actively involved with schools and teachers. Further, their ratio of district office staff to principals and teachers is much smaller than for their regular classroom counterparts. District office personnel for regular schools and teachers have to work with larger numbers of schools and teachers.

The district office personnel in the special interest areas appear to be more cohesive within their units. These individuals seem to be clearer about their missions and their missions appear to be more tightly defined. They are more focused and direct in their work. They are more visible in schools and in comparison to the regular district office staff they seem to be more influential politically within the district office.

There is little congruence between what district office personnel say they do and what others perceive that they do. These perceptual differences are particularly true of persons in staff positions. For example, it is commonly believed that a major role of curriculum coordinators in the district office is

to assist teachers in classrooms. Yet for many coordinators this is not possible because there are so few curriculum coordinators in relation to the total number of teachers in the district. They are spread so thin that they cannot be everywhere. Curriculum coordinators spend a lot of their time in doing district-wide planning, ordering of materials, and other administrative and strategic activities that are not seen by school personnel. Most curriculum specialists state that they would like to have more time in schools than they do, but the other parts of their job demand that they be elsewhere.

Teachers view district office people in line positions as being remote from their classrooms. When line people visit buildings they tend to visit with the principal, and not with teachers. When staff people visit the building they tend to deal more with department heads and teachers, thus the teacher's perception of the line people is that they are much more removed and distant from personal contact. As one illustration of this perception, when teachers refer to the district office as "downtown," they seemed to be referring more to the line administrators than the curriculum coordinators.

Teachers have very little understanding of what persons in the district office really do. As one illustration of this, when teachers were asked about changes that were taking place in the district office, they were often unaware of such things as severe staff reductions that had occurred in the district office. They would be equally unaware of district office personnel changes and they frequently seemed uninformed about issues that the district was facing. "I'm not sure what the district administrators do." Further, teachers doubt that district office personnel know about life in schools. For example, teachers are aware that the district office has curriculum guide lines but "they don't really know what goes on in my classroom."

District office staff feel successful when they see teachers doing things that they have suggested. This indicator of effectiveness was frequently reported by curriculum coordinators. It was not as clear, however, how line staff knew that they had succeeded. It would seem that their image of success is more frequently based on the absence of problems or issues to be handled. However, some line personnel state that higher scores on achievement tests are an indication of their success.

Once assigned to the district office, most personnel do not wish to go back to the classroom, and appear to be successful in remaining "downtown". After personnel move to the district office, they tend to relish the new found opportunities and challenges. Those in staff positions tend to move up within the hierarchy of the curriculum and instruction side of the district office, or they move on to special projects or to larger districts. The line administrators' career path moves from assistant principal, to principal, on the way to district upper level administrative positions. Curiously, there does not appear to be a lot of lateral movement from the district office curriculum side to the administrative side. Rather, it appears that persons in the district office on the curriculum path who wish to move up on the administrative side, first have to go back to the school as an administrator and then re-enter the district office on the line side. The career path to superintendencies is through the principalship and line administration, not through the staff and curriculum side.

How They Work in Relation to the Change Process

The limited research work to date makes it difficult to derive trends and generalizations about how district personnel are involved in change. However,

the following is a summary of some speculations and hypotheses about this aspect of district office persons' work.

District office personnel are providing the impetus as well as being the source of many innovations that are implemented in schools. Many district innovations are created or required as a result of state and federal initiatives. As a consequence schools and classrooms are the recipients of a large number of "outside" innovations. Many of these mandates are seen by district leadership as an opportunity to reinforce their own aims and goals. Consequently, district office personnel often "seize the moment" for transmitting their expectations to schools. There are also many district-specific initiatives, which in combination mean that district office personnel tend to be associated with a large number of changes.

District office personnel tend not to be aware of apparent differences in how they approach elementary schools as compared to secondary schools. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that district office personnel will approach and work in change with elementary schools differently from high schools. Much to our surprise, they do not appear to have consciously thought about these differences. Of course, some district people come from elementary (or secondary) schools and are assigned to work only at that level. When we probed those who were assigned K-12 we were able to identify some differences in their approaches to elementary and secondary schools. For instance, they typically expressed the idea that secondary teachers were subject experts and did not "require" their services. They also noticed that it was hard to gain entry into high schools to introduce ideas; therefore, they tended to give more time to elementary schools where teachers were more open to change and interested in trying new ideas. When pushed to explain details of the differences in their approaches, it was difficult to hear clear distinctions.

Teachers tend to link the credibility of district office personnel to their teaching assignment prior to joining the district office. A comment frequently heard from high school teachers and from people in the district office was that district office personnel with an elementary background had less credibility in high schools. However, the picture does not seem to be that simple. The explanation about lower credibility may be related to a particular district office person's lack of adaptive skills or who for some other reason is not effective in working in high schools. The lack of credibility may relate to the lack of subject area speciality, which is generalized by associating it with their elementary background. Clearly there are coordinators with elementary backgrounds who are effective and credible in high schools. One question for the future must be to study more closely the factors that enhance credibility.

A district office person's credibility with teachers is frequently associated with how long the person has been away from the classroom. This factor of time and distance from the classroom was more frequently associated with staff persons from the district office than with line persons. Teachers imply that after three or four years away from the classroom, credibility is lost. Yet there are many veterans of the district office who are still highly credible. It appears that teachers use these stereotypes to cover a range of district office staff weaknesses and sins, or possibly to keep the changes that district office personnel bring barred at the classroom door.

It appears that the line administrators in the district office make the adoption decision and then it is the staff persons who plan and facilitate implementation at the school and classroom level. This makes sense in that staff persons are more often in schools and line persons are not. Staff persons have closer working relationships with teachers. And a large

percentage of changes are of a curriculum nature which suggests another reason for staff personnel who are typically curriculum specialists to be more involved.

The people in line positions tend to be more administrative in orientation and they deal more directly with principals. In the change process, the role of line personnel becomes one of interpretation of policy (normally only when asked). They provide administrative communication to school administrators and link the district office's goals and expectations about changes to the school. Because they evaluate principals, and "help principals set goals," they are in a position to strongly influence principals and therefore the prospects for change. The follow through with teachers tends to be left to staff persons.

Strategies and Tactics Employed to Facilitate School Change

A part of the research focused on identifying approaches and behaviors that district office personnel employed and found effective in influencing the change process in schools. One of the first impressions is that district office personnel, as well as their school counterparts, have not consciously thought about the change process techniques that they employ. Therefore the insights that we have are more inferential than reflective of clear articulation and examination by school personnel. In spite of this handicap, there are patterns and strategies that district office personnel employed. These include the following.

There is nearly unanimous agreement in the district office that principals are responsible for change within their buildings. The line persons deal with their "direct reports," (principals) in terms of holding them accountable for what is occurring in their building, and staff persons in the district office recognize the importance of working with the principal when they want to see

change in classrooms. In contrast to this perspective, it appears that principals in general do not perceive the empowering mandate to bring about change in the building that district office personnel are assigning them. Delegation of change facilitating duties is sometimes abdication.

A frequently observed strategy for making the initial adoption decision is down/up/down. The typical scenario for this strategy begins with someone(s) in the district office coming up with an idea for a change that is needed. It is then sent "down" to teachers, and perhaps principals and community representatives, to get their initial reactions. Their recommendation is then sent "up" through the chain of command and, with further refinement and formulation, through the superintendent to the board. There, a formal decision is made, and it is sent "down" to the staff to procede with implementation. This down/up/down strategy was frequently heard about. Interestingly, teachers are as aware of their part in it as are district office personnel. Further, they tended to see the process as addressing their desire to have "input," but sometimes say their input didn't change anything.

Perceptions of the District Office Personnel By Others

Establishing credibility of district office staff has been approached in several ways. When a district office staff person with elementary school experience becomes involved with secondary schools, there are ways to initiate their work that enhance potential for credibility. One entry point is to have that person sanctioned by a secondary teacher, district office person, principal, or someone else who already has credibility and can certify the new person. Another approach is to have the (elementary) staff person involved in initial developments of some new thrust for secondary schools. Then by the time that person becomes involved in working with the various secondary school

staff, they associate the person with the innovation. If the innovation is positive, this gives associated expertise to the district office person.

The reciprocal doesn't appear to be as significant a problem. Capable staff persons from secondary backgrounds seem to be more accepted in their area of expertise by elementary school teachers. However, staff persons from the district office with secondary backgrounds also need to be sensitive to the cultural differences of the two kinds of schools.

Teachers perceive district office personnel in line and staff positions differently. In terms of teacher's perceptions of district office persons it has already been pointed out that line persons from the district office are rarely seen or thought about by teachers. On the other side, teachers know that staff persons are regularly in schools, and teachers are quick to say, "They're there when I need them."

Teachers differentiations among the staff persons in the district office are based on their perceived utility. "I will call on some, others I will not call." It has not been possible to determine the specifics of why teachers so actively seek some and avoid others. In our interviews with teachers, probing questions were sloughed off with comments such as, "some have forgotten what it is like to be in the classroom." Occasionally we encountered attitudes or relationships similar to what Blumberg (1980) referred to as the "cold war" between teachers and supervisors (p. 5). In terms of teacher's perceptions of the frequency of district office staff contacts with classrooms, it is probably best summarized by one veteran high school teacher who said, "She liked what I was doing [last fall] so I probably will not see her again." When asked why, "If they like what you are doing, you don't see them. If you aren't doing a good job, you see them."

Staff persons in the district office derive their power from someone with power. If the staff person needs access to a school or needs to put pressure on a teacher, they have to work with the principal or someone above the principal to sanction or to require the kind of change that is being requested. Staff persons frequently have to spend a great deal of energy and intervention time in attempts to get support, however there has been no chance to explore this issue or document this in the work that we've done so far.

District office persons who work with special interest teachers are seen as highly visible. Because there is a greater number of special program district office persons to work with a fewer number of teachers, they are able to be in schools more frequently for greater amounts of time. This gives them much more opportunity for visibility than those district office persons working with regular teachers.

Individual teachers do not perceive that they have a great deal of influence on district policy. Unless they were directly contacted with regard to a particular issue and remember that they were contacted, they are quick to point out that they did not have input. In that sense, the down/up/down strategy doesn't appear to have equal effects across all innovations and teachers. If an individual teacher was not contacted or does not associate some earlier activity that they were involved in as being a way of seeking their input, then they are quick to discount that they ever had any input.

District office personnel believe that much of what they do is based on teacher input. Even though teachers do not perceive that they contribute very much to the development of district policies, programs and projects, district office personnel view the input process very differently. They can report about the dates when particular items were solicited and obtained from

teachers. Nonetheless, if teachers did not have a major role, they do not recall the minor ones. It is not clear how to reconcile these differences.

Perhaps the best summary of the differences in perceptions with regard to how teachers perceive the role of district office personnel is made in these quotes. The elementary schools' perception of the district office's purpose "is to guide us." The high schools state, "The district office is to coordinate." In contrast, a teacher pointed out, "In elementary school we are told to do things they wouldn't even ask a high school to do." Both groups, teachers and district office personnel, have their own perceptions of what is happening; however teachers in general have relatively little interest in what goes on beyond their classrooms.

Life in the District Office

District office personnel do not have a simplistic role. It seems clear that the role of the district office personnel is more complex and less well understood than is suggested by the stereotypes held by the public. There is an assumption that district office personnel and especially curriculum staff spend nearly all their time actively involved in supervision at the classroom level. In fact most district office personnel are not doing this. Our findings from our interviews are consistent with the research of others such as Glickman and Blumberg, who were cited earlier.

Communication lines within the district office do not always work well. It appears that district office personnel typically do not know what other district office personnel are doing. In several districts there were few systematic approaches to communication within the district office, even within the curriculum area of the district office. In general, the line

administrators appear to be in closer communication around their jobs than are the curriculum and instruction staff.

District office personnel are consistently in a cross fire of demands and expectations. It appears that the immediacy of job demands in the district office do not allow time for staff to be as actively involved in supervision of schools and classrooms as they would like, and as others expect. There seems to be a constant barrage of demands for meetings; writing and reviewing planning documents; filling out forms for the district, the state and the federal government; and responding to individual requests of administrators and teachers. This in combination with the various legal issues, policy decisions, moment-to-moment crises such as leaky roofs, litigation, and textbook adoptions consume so much of their time that many line and staff persons are not regularly involved in schools.

District office personnel do not have specialized training for their positions. Even though district office persons may be trained in supervision, they are not trained in the kinds of activities that the bulk of their jobs entail. They are dealing with so many types of pressing items that they do not have time to be reflective about their work. Further, they do not appear to have a great deal of training in how to facilitate change and to be leaders from the district office. One of the reasons that this may be true is that so little is known about what their jobs are and how they can work in leadership roles.

Describing what they do is difficult. What district office personnel do is seldom documented. It is even more difficult to demonstrate that it makes a difference. The details of their specializations and services are not well documented and the things that they do are not immediately reflected in classrooms or by noticeable differences in outcomes on student test scores.

Further, persons in the district office are not doing a good job of communicating and describing what they do. It is not clear that they have individually, and certainly not collectively, conceptualized their roles and functions or described operationally how they relate to the mission, goals, and objectives of the district.

Who is line and who is staff? There is a distinction between approaches, responsibilities, and activities of district office personnel based on whether they are in line or staff positions. At the same time, these differences are not conceptualized and well understood by those in the positions. And they are not understood by their counterparts in the schools. Many district office personnel are not even clear about who is line and who is staff. Some think they are both.

The District Office in Action

The following case studies illustrate many of the points included in the description of findings of the role of district office personnel in change. Two districts are examined, both of which are similar in size and population.

Case Study A: From A System of Schools to A School System

In this vignette, district office personnel in a district in the Midwestern United States turned a severe decline in enrollment and resources into an opportunity to reorganize and improve their entire secondary education program. The Superintendent in this district, which serves approximately 30,000 students, responded to the declining enrollment and the resulting decrease in state funds by recognizing the problem and pushing for a proactive response that would complement his commitment to establish a unified

curriculum. The Superintendent spurred the changes; the district office personnel responded.

In this case study the actions of the district office personnel are traced, and significant interventions which contributed to the success of their efforts at reorganizing and improving their secondary education program are presented. How the case relates to our recent study findings and speculations is discussed.

A number of important decisions, plans, and innovations were implemented to address the district's declining enrollment problem. Included in this bundle of innovations were an effort to unify and improve the secondary education program overall, and to change a self-contained vocational high school into an extended campus to serve the entire district's vocational education needs. The vocational program was coupled with special academic offerings for high school high achieving students. A related change was moving the ninth grade students from junior high schools to high schools. At the same time, special attention was given to the evaluation of teachers and administrators and to an "administrator academy," as a vehicle for improving management and evaluation skills and for soliciting and exchanging feedback.

The entire process was promoted and supported by the Superintendent by his actions and almost daily contact with the district office administrators as they worked on the written plan. He also encouraged the effort by his contact with the Board of Education. He kept them updated; he solicited their input. His position was clear to everyone.

Extended Campus Concept

One example of the district office action in this districtwide effort was the development of the extended campus concept. The plan was designed in

detail by the Director of Secondary Education who conceived the extended-campus idea as an innovative delivery system for the vocational-technical program and for advanced courses for college-bound students. She used her position as the person in charge of all programs, supervision, and evaluation, and her regular meetings with all high school principals to gain support for the districtwide changes and to facilitate their use.

A special advisory council was formed early, involving parents, students, high school teachers, principals and district administrators. Frequent contact with the Superintendent became critical as the extended campus concept became a districtwide concern. The Superintendent showed continuing support for the plan by keeping it in front of the Board. With the Superintendent's push and school board approval, the technical high school's facilities were closed as a "home campus" for students. It was reopened as a "resource center" for students from all high schools in the district, thus becoming an extended campus. A district plan for busing students from their respective home campuses to and from the extended campus for a two or three hour block of time was put into operation the first year of implementation. Counselors were made part of the "decision-making process" and were encouraged to inform students and encourage them to take courses at the extended campus.

Discussion

The establishment of the extended campus provides clear examples of two of our study findings. First, district office personnel served as the impetus as well as the source of the innovations that were being implemented in schools. Specifically, the Superintendent and the Director of Secondary Education provided the impetus and leadership for the innovations. The entire bundle of innovations was initiated at the district level in response to this district's

declining enrollment problems. The second of our findings illustrated by the scenario is the down/up/down strategy for making the initial adoption decision. After the idea was conceived and planned by the Director of Secondary Education, it was then sent down to the community, students, teachers, and principals via the Advisory Council. It then went back up to the Board. After the formal decision was made, it was sent back down to the staff for implementation.

Standardization of Curriculum

The second innovation in the district's response to the enrollment decline was the centralization of the curriculum and sets of standardized curriculum objectives. A key strategy, based on a district evaluation report and push from a school board member, was the creation of a new position, Director of Curriculum K-12. The Director of Secondary Education (line) took steps to support the Director of Curriculum (staff) by working with him to define his role and by sanctioning his role. When the Director of Secondary Education presided over meetings with principals, she asked the Director of Curriculum to attend in order to give him an opportunity to know principals better, to hear their opinions and to learn how to best work with them to implement the changes.

At principals' meetings the Director of Secondary Education not only listened to principals but al expressed her commitment to district supervisors and urged principals to use the important services offered by the supervisors and consultants. Monthly, the Director of Curriculum collected written information from supervisors about which building they had been in each day, who they saw, what they did. He also asked supervisors and consultants

not to wait to respond to calls for assistance but to go to high schools on their own initiative.

A second key strategy was the establishment of districtwide goals and objectives. The curriculum was adjusted by adding and eliminating courses. Establishment of a districtwide curriculum advisory committee facilitated this effort. Some courses were no longer offered in the home schools, (such as vocational courses, advanced placement English and history, foreign languages, and selected math, science, and social studies courses), and students would have to go to the extended campus if they wanted them. The districtwide attendance area of the extended campus sparked another district-initiated innovation. Consequently, the busing system was put in operation. Students bound for extended campus courses are picked up at their respective high school immediately following the daily attendance check. They are then bused to extended campus for a block of four hours maximum. They are returned to their respective high school in time for lunch and can easily participate in end of day school activities at their "own" high school. No high school in the district is further than 20 minutes away from extended campus by bus.

All courses in the district have districtwide objectives, and students are tested on the objectives at the end of the semester. These tests also assess teachers and evaluate courses in relationship to district objectives.

Discussion

This innovation provides a second example of district office personnel providing impetus as well as serving as the source for innovations. It also illustrates how line administrators in the district office make the final adoption decision and staff persons serve as the planners and facilitators of implementation at the school and classroom level. The line administrators

appointed the Director of Curriculum and strongly urged school-based administrators to make better use of the supervisors and consultants. It was then the staff personnel, the Director of Curriculum and his supervisors and consultants who went into the schools to teachers change their curriculum practice.

We had observed in the study the administrators in line positions tended to be more "administrative" in their orientation and to deal more directly with principals. This finding was illustrated by the Director of Instruction working directly with the high school principals and impressing them with the importance of using the district-based supervisors and consultants as resources. The principals and the consultants and supervisors would then carry the message to the teachers. As noted earlier, staff persons in the district office derive their power from someone with power. If a staff person needs access to a school, he or she has to work with the principal or someone above the principal to gain entry sanction or mandate the change. The Director of Instruction's intervention was required to activate the principals in using the consultants and supervisors.

In this case, district office personnel, both line and staff, played an active and influential role in moving this school district from a system of schools to a school system. They planned, they encouraged, they informed, they solicited input, they supported, they created advisory panels and new positions. They actively sought long-range and short-range input and feedback from a variety of sources. They adjusted curriculum, they pushed for and helped reorganize their schools. The Superintendent had a goal; he pushed and spurred the changes. He kept in daily contact with the planning process, and he updated the Board. He listened to the Board and to the administrators. The Director of Secondary Education in a line position, was key in developing

plans, and the Director of Curriculum in a staff position, was key in implementing those plans.

No knowledgeable person would surmise that the final plan, or even the direction of the change, pleased everyone. However, knowledge of that direction was widely known and accepted. Even in the presence of resistance and declining resources, the changes were accomplished.

Case Study B: Where There's A Will, There's A Way

The introduction of a new superintendent in 1982 marked the beginning of a major reorganization for this high school district. Over a time span of eighteen months, two assistant superintendents changed roles, many new district administrative staff positions were created, and five of the nine high schools had new principals. The goal of this reorganization was the improvement of instruction in district schools through increased coordination and centralization at the district office level.

Previously the superintendent had been in charge of the design and development of an assessment system for the district. Now he played a central role in providing the impetus for many of the organizational and program changes that were implemented in the district. The coordination and implementing of the changes were addressed by the superintendent through the creation of new staff positions, in particular that of a "Director of School Effectiveness" who would work with the high school staffs and their principals in planning, monitoring, and solving the problems of implementing the various innovations that were clustered under the school effectiveness label. While this role and the School Effectiveness program were innovations in themselves, they also served as a focal point for coordinating many of the other

innovations initiated by the district office. School Effectiveness became the "umbrella" for the coordination and integration of the various instructional and professional development efforts initiated in the district.

District Sponsored Innovations

Historically, this district had a reputation for an emphasizing instructional improvement. The approaches taken to improving instruction and the level of student achievement varied, however, with the individual school, its community, and its principal. The new superintendent and district office personnel saw increased centralization as one means to even out the differences between schools, as well as for coordinating the necessary resources for making change easier. The district office introduced a number of innovations and innovation bundles to the schools in the 1982-83 period. These included the introduction of a new attendance policy, the continued implementation of Madalyn Hunter's Essential Elements of Instruction, the use of Program Improvement Plans by teachers, a reorganization of curriculum and curriculum options, a change in graduation requirements, the development of districtwide curriculum objective tests, a movement toward increased accountability and evaluation of teachers which was linked to a system of merit pay, and the School Effectiveness program, to name a few. All of these were introduced, facilitated, and monitored by the district office in some way or another.

District Strategies for Adoption and Implementation

The general approach taken by the district office in initiating new programs follows this sequence: once an idea or need is established that is in

line with the district's emphasis on instructional improvement and school effectiveness, it is presented to the Board for initial discussion. The Board then directs a committee of teachers and principals to learn more about the program or process and make recommendations. If the committee and the Board then decide that the innovation would be beneficial, curriculum coordinators or others would be trained in the program so that they could provide training for the entire district.

Overall, the district had shown a tendency to be more effective in initiating implementation of selected innovations than in successfully completing implementation such that changes became institutionalized. Teachers were exposed to a number of different innovations at once without a clear implementation period. Their response was increased concern about accountability as these new programs were monitored. They saw the district innovations as being too numerous to be able to do well. As the focus of these innovations was on achievement scores and a more centralized evaluation system, teachers saw their own evaluation as linked to district changes. The School Effectiveness process was intended as a means to provide for discussion, clarification. and implementation of district changes as they were in line with the needs of specific schools. While this did not entirely soothe teacher concerns, it did create a better sense of school decision making. Despite pressure on teachers, the district's emphasis on instructional improvement and school effectiveness made a definite difference in student achievement in the district.

The district office did attempt to provide better facilitation for implementation through the creation of new staff roles that would lend assistance and expertise to teachers using the innovations. Two new staff roles were established within each school to allow for in-house guidance and

development for the Essential Elements of Instruction program. These persons also worked with the principal at the school to assess staff needs and develop resources. Further, curriculum coordinators at the district level were trained as experts in new programs and were a resource to teachers implementing district programs. Creating the staff role of the Director of School Effectiveness, however, was a major strategy within the district's game plan for school improvement.

The School Effectiveness Process and Its Director

The role of the Director of School Effectiveness served as a focal point for the coordination of several programs and was a staff position reporting to the Assistant Superintendent for Instruction. The person selected for the role had been a high school principal in another state and was familiar with the needs and attitudes of both school staffs and school principals. The School Effectiveness process required a person who could set long-range goals and develop plans directed toward the goals and who could interface well with both teachers and other administrators.

The School Effectiveness process requires that each school form a school team to assess the needs of the school and plan how to meet those needs. The Director meets with the school teams on a frequent basis with the goal of clarifying, refining, and facilitating the process. At the introduction of the program, the Director developed a 3-year structured plan intended to result in institutionalization of the Effective Schools process in the district. His activities came out of that plan and included individual conferences with principals before major team sessions, collecting data for decision making in team groups and being visible and accessible (He would stay in the school all day, even if there was only a morning meeting just to be available.). He also

wrote notes to principals and teachers on the team about what they did, sent articles to teams with personal notes, and generally emphasized credibility, "I want them to see the process as serving something higher than (instructional) whims. This is the eighth school I have been in this week. I will attend a meeting in the morning and talk about effective schools and the process and then talk to teams members one on one. I try to deal with each school, team, and principal in an individualized fashion. I make myself available. (Sometimes it seems like) I haven't developed a major strategy (to get the innovation going) other than to sell myself."

The other innovations also being implemented by the district became a part of the Effective Schools process because they were a part of being "effective" and because the school effectiveness teams provided a natural forum for problem solving and planning .

The major limitations expressed by the Director in regard to his role were that he was limited in budget, could not evaluate teachers and use evaluation to enforce what might be done, and that he had no line authority within the organization to back up what he saw as necessary action. At times getting things done at the district office required him to situationally utilize the chain of command to get backing for what needed to be accomplished.

Discussion

The actions taken by the district office and the events surrounding those actions illustrate many of the findings discussed earlier in this paper. The process by which innovations were adopted and implemented is the down/up/down decision-making pattern in which early discussion of the change goes down to the school level for investigation and recommendation, back to upper

administration or the Board for final decision making, and back down to the school for implementation. For all of the innovations mentioned in this case study, and others, the district office was the impetus for and source of the change. The district's focus on instructional improvement was the basis of a game plan for the selection of innovations and the creation of staff roles to facilitate these innovations. As noted in one of the findings in an earlier section of the paper, "It appears that the line administrators in the district office make the adoption decision and then it is the staff persons who plan and facilitate implementation at the school and classroom level." The game plan developed by the district formalized this through the creation of the new staff roles related to innovations as described earlier.

Another finding concerning differences between line and staff positions is illustrated by the role of the Director of School Effectiveness. While the Director was responsible for much of what happened in the schools, he did not have the line authority necessary to back up some of his dicta and had to seek it from other sources, i.e., "staff persons in the district office derive their backing power from someone with power" (previous section). Still another finding links the credibility of district office personnel with their assignments prior to joining the district office. In this case the Director's prior experience was as a high school principal which helped his credibility with school staff. Further, the requirements of the job made him more visible to them. Given that most teachers seem to have little understanding of what persons in the district office do, also a finding discussed earlier, the experience and visibility of the Director likely contributed to the success of the program.

The descriptions of events from these two districts provide examples of the data from which our impressions and hypotheses, as presented earlier in

this paper, were derived. The activities illustrate what district office people do. In the next section of the paper, we provide some recommendations for what district office staff might think about doing in the future, and we also speak to policymakers and those researchers who are planning to do studies of district office staff.

Recommendations for Next Steps

Key points and a summary of initial understandings about the role of district office personnel follow in this section. It should be re-emphasized that the analyses to this point are exploratory and descriptive. The purpose is nomination of variables and generation of hypotheses that can be the subject of further study. We should note also the limits to the power of the data and therefore the findings. The sample is limited in size; in some ways each school district is an n of one. Thus, generalization of findings must be approached with a great deal of caution. At the same time, we have travelled a great deal, talked with a large number of practitioners and researchers, and have accessed the data and studies of others when it has been available to help build this picture. The tentative hypotheses and speculations seem reasonable at this point.

In our view there is an abominable lack of information, understanding, concepts, and resources available for examining and supporting the growth of staff in district offices or to guide related policy development. The results of the descriptive work that we have done is consistent with the results of earlier studies, but we believe we have raised some new questions and we have some suggestions for what could be constructive next steps. We have organized these into three areas of recommendations -- those dealing with research,

practice, and policy.

Research Recommendations

There is a need for ethnographic studies. Interviews and questionnaires can provide only so much detail and there is always a degree of uncertainty about the validity of responses. Further, there are differences in perceptions depending on who in the district office and in schools is interviewed. Sorting out which reports and perceptions are valid descriptions of district office personnel will require intensive documentation strategies. An important next step would be a set of in-depth ethnographic studies of district office personnel. An intensive set of field studies with ongoing documentation and description of the roles, activities, influences, and effects of their work should be very instructive. With in-depth case studies, data can be accumulated and used to more objectively develop job and role descriptions. Hopefully, a part of this work would be done with the specific focus of looking at their role in influencing the change process in schools.

Standard role definitions need to be developed. Out of this type of field work and examination of administrative theory, curriculum theory, and school district policy, it should be possible to develop and propose standard definitions of roles and standard terminology for each role. At the present time labels and role definitions are highly idiosyncratic and it is not at all clear what responsibilities go with each role. In this study and in the earlier works of others the focus has been on describing what they do. An equally important question is what should they be doing? What can these roles be and how can we define them in ways that will advance the process of schooling? Model development and role definition can contribute a great deal to research and practice.

Definitions of effectiveness are needed. For both line and staff persons in the district office there is a strong need to conceptualize effective practice. Effectiveness in this sense has to be defined in terms of the roles and responsibilities that district office personnel have. It is highly unlikely that the effects of district office personnel will be visible in student achievement test scores. And if they are, it is going to be through some long term pattern rather than through the immediate feedback that policy makers and others are typically looking for. Other criteria of effectiveness must be considered. One set of criteria could address their effectiveness in facilitating change. Another could deal with their effectiveness in approaching and working in credible ways with elementary and secondary schools. Still others could be developed around their in office tasks.

Practice Recommendations

District personnel need to work on defining and clarifying their own roles. District office personnel in many ways are completely overwhelmed by the number of tasks and responsibilities that they have. An important step toward helping them feel less overwhelmed, as well as for giving them a sense of priority over how to spend their time, would be for them to clarify their roles and responsibilities. This could be done through a district office retreat, or with the use of consultants. The objective would be to get clearer about what the priorities are and which activities they should be doing. A part of this role definition must address the issue of coordination and communication among the various members of the central office. Another part should address the differences between jobs that need to be done in the district office, those that need to be done in schools and with teachers, and

their responsibilities that lie outside of schools and the district office. Once these definitions and distinctions are developed they should be shared.

District office personnel need to develop a supportive constituency. At this time it is clear that district office personnel do not have support groups. This is especially true and critical to persons in staff positions. The general perceptions and cynicism of teachers is that they don't know what district office personnel do, that they probably wouldn't be missed too much if they were gone, and that there are too many of them. At the same time, district offices are contracting in size and more tasks are being placed on them. Unfortunately the tasks and jobs that the district office personnel are doing are not those that teachers and others expect in terms of their stereotypic definitions. As a consequence, when a press comes for a reduction in forces there is no clear support for district office personnel. District office personnel will have to deliberately work to develop constituencies that are aware of what they do and why it is important. Otherwise the eroding of their numbers and the confusion about their image is likely to continue.

Cuts in personnel should be done based on systemic planning. One of the consequences of the absence of a constituent support group for district office personnel is that when district resources are reduced, they become easy targets. The scenario seems to be happening repeatedly. Due to board, tax payer, state or federal cut backs, the district must adjust and the majority if not all of the cuts come out of staff positions in the district office. This is a politically sensible place to cut because the view of teachers and others is that there are too many people in the district office and "besides, they never get to my classroom and I don't need them." The other areas of the district office are seen as more directly tied to vital functions of the district. For example, the persons in line administrative positions are direct

supervisors of school personnel. In addition, persons in the special interest programs are generally protected from cuts by state and federal legislation and perhaps even state and federal support.

The consequence of reducing district office staff positions is that regular teachers, who tend to be the largest number of teachers in the district, will have even fewer support resources. Ironically these same teachers sometimes advocate the cutting because these personnel are not highly visible. Meanwhile the special interest supported district office personnel continue to work with a relatively small proportion of the schools and teachers. Short term effects of cuts in the district office have not been documented. The longer term consequences of cutting the district office staff likely include decreased curriculum relevance, restricted strategic planning for the district in terms of instruction and curriculum, less relevant professional development for teachers and other instructional staff, and a general lack of updating teachers, administrators and curriculum. There may be a short term budget balancing, but the consequences can be long term bankruptcy of the district's instructional program.

District office personnel need to become reflective about their work. Persons in the district office need to take time and develop skill in becoming reflective about what they do. The task burden and working norms of the district office seem to work against this goal. Yet, reflection about what they are doing individually and what they are doing collectively is sorely needed.

Line people need to increase their visibility too. The little time that line administrators have in schools is almost exclusively spent with principals. It would help in developing their support group if they were more active and visible in classrooms and if they regularly interact with teachers

directly. However, this would mean doing more than the token "walk through."

Policy Recommendations

Be cautious in reducing district office staff numbers. Most other personnel within the school district have an active support group, ranging from the political power of special interest to the power of unions. Even line administrators in the central office typically belong to the principals association and are supported by them. However, central office curriculum staff are not aligned with and supported by their counterparts in the teachers union. "Supervisor's jobs are constantly in jeopardy at the bargaining table, but they seldom have an advocate during the negotiating process" (Costa and Guditus, 1984, p. 84). Without a political advocacy outside, or the power base of the union inside, this role becomes very susceptible to absorbing the impacts of ebbs in district resources. Curriculum staff do serve a set of functions that deal directly with the mission of school districts. Their removal is likely to be noticeable in a couple of years and caution is needed in reducing these positions without first projecting what the consequences are likely to be.

Recognize the authority limitations of persons in staff positions. There is a tendency on the part of administrators and policy makers to assume implicitly that staff who are not in line positions can do things the same way that those with formal authority do. Persons in authority positions seem to forget the implications of power that go with their positions, and thus have unreasonable expectations of the potential influence of persons in staff positions. Persons in staff positions have to constantly rely on their "credibility." As a last resort they have to go back through the chain of command to have authority by referral, and use indirect influence techniques.

The consequence is lost time and energy that could be more directly used in effecting school practice. If persons in line positions would do more to sanction and support the activities of staff persons, then all would have greater effectiveness.

Legitimize the many activities of district office personnel. It is clear that district office personnel have a wide range of roles and responsibilities. Because their jobs are fractured and diversified, it is difficult for them to show an accumulation of effects or to have a continuing sense of priority. Policy makers can help by clarifying and publicizing the major functions that make up the roles and responsibilities of different district office personnel. If accountability and planning systems reflect these policy guidelines, then it is conceivable that district office personnel will have less role ambiguity and that others will begin to understand the importance of the roles in terms of their realities rather than in terms of the stereotypes that are so commonly held.

Conclusion

In summary, the roles and functions of the persons in the district office are multi-faceted and diversified in terms of location as well as in terms of task. The stereotypes of the roles that are held by the public at large and by the teachers in schools do not appear to be congruent with their actual activities. Line and staff differences appear to be a useful first step in distinguishing roles. The differences in formal authority appears to be a critical factor. Beyond that, it appears there is much to be done by research that can inform us about the lives and functions of persons in the district office. There is also much that district office personnel can do to become

clear about their roles and functions and how they can be more effective, especially as it relates to facilitating change in schools.

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Appendix 1

Summary of Data Base

	1983	1984	1985	Total
Number of Districts	5	5	1	11
Number of Interviews in District Office	19	25	16	60
Number of School-Based Interviews	208	221	61	490

Total number of interviews = 560

Appendix 2

District Office Interview

Background/Career Path

1. How long have you been in this position? How did you come to this DO position? What did you do before?

Organizational Role/Relationship with Others in DO

2. What is your role as _____? What do you actually do?

3. Is there such a thing as a "typical" day for you? Can you describe it, or maybe describe what different days are like? What percent of your time do you actually spend in schools during a typical week? (Distinguish between time in school offices and time in classrooms with individual teachers.)

4. If you had to choose one adjective (metaphor?) to describe your role, what would it be? Which things in your job take the most time?

5. Who do you work with in the district office? What is your relationship to them? Are there regularly scheduled meetings with DO people? Who attends them? Who organizes the meetings? (If no meetings, how do you communicate information? Formally and/or informally)

6. How do you perceive the roles of other DO personnel in change? Do other DO personnel spend their time much the same as you do?

7. What's your relationship with the Supt.? How do you communicate up the chain of command?

8. What resources and/or decisions do you control?

Role/Relationship with Schools

9. In your opinion, are there many changes taking place in the schools in your district? Can you tell me what kinds? Where do most of these changes originate? Do you initiate any?

10. Are you responsible for implementing any specific programs or changes this year? What are some of the things you are doing to accomplish this? (Probe for specific activity, building-level contacts, percent of time engaged in.)

11. What is your relationship with the high school? Is it different with the elementary school? How do you approach schools when you want to get things done? (For instance, how do you initiate contact? Do you approach elementary and high schools differently?

12. How do schools "gate keep?" How do you get through it?

Appendix 2 Continued

13. When the elementary school wants your help, who contacts you, and how? When the high school wants your help, who contacts you, and how?

14. How do you (or other DO people) monitor the implementation of changes? (Or do you?)

Status/Indicators of Effectiveness/Efficacy

15. What are the differences between line and staff DO positions? (Probe: in their perceptions/activities/effectiveness?)

16. Do you perceive yourself as having real power to change things?

17. Do you get feedback on your work? From whom? Do you get support? From whom?

18. What kind of tangible or intangible ways do you have of knowing when you're being effective in your work? How do you know when you've made a difference? What are the indicators to show you've made a difference?

Influence of Size

19. Have you ever worked in a district office that was larger or smaller than this one? What was different about the way you worked there?

20. Do you have any ideas about where you'd like to go next in your career?

Appendix 3

School-Based Personnel Interview

District Office Relationship

For each of these questions keep in mind the tentative distinctions between (I) general curriculum/subject matter staff, (II) special interest area consultants/supervisors, (III) line administrators and (IV) other administrative personnel.

1. From your position, what do you see as the major responsibilities of the personnel in the district office?

2. In what ways do district office personnel interact with and influence what happens in your school/classroom?

3. How often are district office personnel in your school (and classroom)?

4. What kinds of things/help/ideas do you get from the district office personnel you have contact with? (Who, what and cross-check with D.O. interview)

5. What have they done in your school (and classroom) that has made a difference (positive or negative)?

6. How do you/can you influence decisions in the district office? (Decisions may need to be focused on curriculum or some other area, if so is there more than one area?)

7. Have there been any recent changes in the staffing or organization or responsibilities of the district office? What were they? Why did they occur? Have these changes affected you or your school in any way?

8. When the district office people want to bring about a change in your school, how do they go about it? Is there a pattern to how they bring about change?